

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-13
CU-02 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 EB-08 FAA-00 DOTE-00
OC-06 CCO-00 MCT-01 SSM-03 COME-00 LAB-04 SIL-01
/108 W

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O P 201253Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1076
INFO AMEMBASSY DACCA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY
CINCPAC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 3935

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR GARBLED THROUGHOUT TEXT

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PK, PINT
SUBJECT: POSITIONS HARDEN AS THE COUNTRY UNRAVELS

SUMMARY: THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN BHUTTO AND THE
OPPOSITION SHARPENS AGAINST A BACKDROP OF INCREASING
VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY IN PAKISTAN. THE PM
WILL ATTEMPT TO HOLD ON TO POWER AS LONG AS POSSIBLE AND
HAS NOW ARMED AND SENT HIS SUPPORTERS INTO THE STREETS
TO CONFRONT PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOLLOWERS. BHUTTO
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CONTINUES TO HOLD OUT AN OLIVE BRANCH TO THE OPPOSITION
BUT WITH NEGILIGIBLE CHANCES OF ACCEPTANCE.
WE BELIEVE THE OPPOSITIONN,IN FACE OF BHUTTO'S OBDURACY,
WILL FOLLOW TWO COURSES-INCREASE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE AND
PARALYZE THE NATION BY DISRUPTING ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES.
THE PNA HAS PLACED CENTRAL EMPHASIS ON REMOVAL OF PM FROM
OFFICE. MUFTI MAHMUD HAS NOW REFINED OPPOSITION DEMANDS TO

INCLUDE PRESIDENT'S RULE PENDING NEW ELECTIONS. SITUATION ON THE GROUND CONTINUES TO UNRAVEL. STUDENTS ARE MORE ACTIVE, ALTHOUGH LABOR HAS STILL NOT ASSUMED MAJOR ROLE IN THE MOVEMENT NATION-WIDE. STUDENTS ARE CALLING FOR HARTALS TO DISRUPT TRANSPORTATION, PIA WORKERS HAVE GONE ON STRIKE THEREBY GROUNDING MOST PIA DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS. THE ARMY STILL HOLDS THE KEY AND WE BELIEVE ITS POSITION IS UNCHANGED-IT DOES NOT WANT TO BE DRAWN INTO THE CONFLICT AND WANTS A CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION. WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT WILL MOVE UNTIL IT SEES ALL OTHER OPTIONS HAVE DISAPPEARED. THESE OTHER OPTIONS STILL INCLUDE PRESIDENT'S RULE OR THE REMOVAL OF THE PM FROM POWER BY THE PPP PARLIAMENTARY GROUP. LIKELIHOOD OF LATTER IS QUITE SMALL, AND FORMER IMPROBABLE, IF NOT IMPOSED BY ARMY, UNLESS BHUTTO AGREES TO GO PEACEFULLY. IF ARMY FACED WITH STARK CHOICE OF TAKING OVER OR WITNESSING A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF LAW AND ORDER AND DISRUPTION OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES, THEY WOULD RELUCTANTLY CHOOSE THE FORMER. END SUMMARY.

1. THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN BHUTTO AND THE PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE IS BECOMING SHARPER AS VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROPERTY INCREASE DAILY. THE OPPOSITION IS MOVING TO HEIGHTEN PRESSURE ON THE PM AND IS STEPPING UP ITS AGITATIONAL TACTICS AS THE PM DIGS IN HIS HEELS AND HIS OBDURACY GROWS.

2. POLITICAL OBSERVERS BELIEVE THE PM WILL HANG ON TO POWER AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. THE CHANCES OF HIS EXITING GRACEFULLY ARE NEARLY NIL AND HE IS USING EVERY WEAPON IN HIS ARSENAL
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TO THWART ATTEMPTS TO REMOVE HIM FROM POWER. HE CONTINUES TO TRY TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF BUSINESS AS USUAL- A FACADE WHICH IS INCREASINGLY THREADBARE IN THE FACE OF THE NATIONAL UPHEAVAL. HE HAS CALLED FOR THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO CONVENE ON APRIL 26 TO HANDLE THE ROUTINE LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR. HE

HAS ALSO GRANTED SUBSTANTIAL PAY INCREASES TO THOSE ON THE GOVERNMENT PAYROLL (BEING REPORTED SEPTEL,) IN THE HOPE (UNJUSTIFIED WE BELIEVE) OF BUYING THEIR LOYALTY IN THE PRESENT CRISIS.

3. AT THE SAME TIME, BHUTTO HAS DRAWN ON ONE OF HIS LAST CARDS AND HAS ARMED HIS FOLLOWERS AND SENT THEM INTO THE STREETS TO CONFRONT THE PNA. WE ARE RECEIVING REPORTS OF PITCHED BATTLES BETWEEN PPP AND PNA SUPPORTERS IN VARIOUS PUNJAB AND SIND CITIES; BALUCHISTAN AND THE FRONTIER REMAIN RELATIVELY QUIET. MANY OF THE PPP SUPPORTERS ARE REPORTEDLY GOONDAS (HOODLUMS FOR HIRE) WHO ARE WILLING TO TAKE ON THE PNA IN THE STREETS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ALSO MOBILIZED ITS

RESOURCES TO TURN OUT MARCHES AND PROCESSIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE PM. SECTION 144 IS BEING PROGRESSIVELY WITHDRAWN IN THE SIND AND ORDERS HAVE BEEN ISSUED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY PUNJAB TO THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONERS NOT TO ENFORCE SECTION 144 IN THEIR AREAS. YESTERDAY IN LAHORE THE PARTY ORGANIZED A MARCH BY THE "POOR" IN SUPPORT OF BHUTTO'S RECENT REFORMS. THE PM ALSO CONTINUES TO HOLD OUT THE OLIVE BRANCH TO THE PNA IN AN ATTEMPT EITHER TO PRECIPITATE DIVISIONS IN THE ALLIANCE OR TO LEAD IT TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE-AN ATTEMPT WITH NEGLIGIBLE CHANCES OF ACCEPTANCE.

4. WE BELIEVE THAT THE OPPOSITION, IN THE FACE OF THE PM'S UNWILLINGNESS TO ABDICATE, HAS DECIDED TO FOLLOW TWO COURSES. THE FIRST IS TO INCREASE THE LEVEL OF VIOLENCE, HASTEN THE COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF LAW AND ORDER AND THEREBY FORCE EITHER THE MILITARY OR THE PPP PARLIAMENTARY GROUP TO REMOVE THE PRIME MINISTER, PAVING THE WAY FOR A PNA
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TAKEOVER BY PROMPT NEW ELECTIONS. THE OPPOSITION IS ALSO TAKING FURTHER STEPS TO PARALYZE THE NATION AND ACCELAERATE THE COMPLETE DISINTEGRATION OF MOST ESSENTIAL PUBLIC SERVICES.

5. THE OPPOSITION IS PLACING GREATER EMPHASIS ON THE NECESSITY OF REMOVING THE PM FROM OFFICE. ALTHOUGH THIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN ONE OF THE PNA'S DEMANDS, IT HAS RECENTLY BECOME THE HEART OF THE ISSUE FOR THE OPPOSITION. THE STATEMENT RELEASED WHEN NASRULLAH ON APRIL 18 REJECTED THE PM'S LATEST OFFERS HIGHLIGHTS THE NECSSITY OF REMOVING THE PM. ALTHOUGH BEFORE APRIL 9- BLACK SATURDAY IN LAHORE-IT MAY HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE AN AGREEMENT WHERE THE PM STAYED IN OFFICE PENDING NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS, SUCH A COURSE BECOMES LESS LIKELY AS EACH DAY PASSES.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 3935

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y F R O G A R B L E D I N P A R A 1 2

6. PNA LEADER MUFTI MAHMUD GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE IN HARIPUR JAIL APRIL 20. HE REITERATED THE PNA POSITION THAT BHUTTO'S RECENT "ISLAMIC" STEPS WERE FRAUDULENT AND WENT ON TO RESTATE THE PNA'S DEMANDS, BUT WITH MORE SPECIFICITY THAN BEFORE. THE FIRST DEMAND WAS FOR BHUTTO'S REMOVAL AND THE SECOND FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS SUPERVISED BY THE ARMY AND THE JUDICIARY. HE THEN WENT ON TO CALL FOR PRESIDENT'S RULE AT THE CENTER AND GOVERNOR'S RULE IN THE PROVINCES. (WE ARE NOT CERTAIN IF CONSTITUTIONALLY UNDER PRESIDENT'S RULE THE PRIME MINISTER WILL CONTINUE TO HOLD OFFICE BUT BE POWERLESS OR IF THE OFFICE WOULD CONFIDENTIAL

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BE CONSIDERED VACANT. WE ASSUME, HOWEVER, THAT IN EITHER EVENT THE PRESIDENT WOULD RULE DIRECTLY WITH A GROUP OF APPOINTED ADVISORS TO ASSIST HIM.) MUFTI ALSO CALLED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INTERIM GOVERNMENT UNTIL NEW NATIONAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS.

7. THE SITUATION ON THE GROUND CONTINUES TO WORSEN AS THE COUNTRY UNRAVELS. KARACHI AND LAHORE HAVE REPORTED THE WORSENING SECURITY SITUATION IN THEIR AREAS SEPARATELY. STUDENTS ARE PLAYING AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT AND EFFECTIVE ROLE IN THE PNA STRATEGY. HERE IN PINDI, THEY HAVE CALLED FOR A COMPLETE HARTAL ON THE 22ND AND HAVE SAID THEY WILL HALT ALL TRANSPORTATION IN THE CITY. THE HARTAL WILL LAST "INDEFINITELY" UNTIL BHUTTO LEAVES OFFICE. ALTHOUGH LABOR IS BECOMING ACTIVE IN SUPPORTING PNA ACTIVITIES IN KARACHI, AS REPORTED BY CONGEN, IT HAS NOT YET ASSUMED A MAJOR ROLE NATION-WIDE IN THE MOVEMENT AGAINST THE PM. PIA HAS CANCELLED NEARLY ALL ITS DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL

FLIGHTS. THE AIRLINE PROFESSIONALS ARE STRIKING FOR NON-POLITICAL REASONS - TO ACHIEVE A REVISION IN THEIR CONTRACTS. THE NON--PROFESSIONALS ARE STRIKING AS WELL, HOWEVER, AND HAVE SAID THE AIRLINE WILL REMAIN SHUT DOWN UNTIL BHUTTO LEAVES OFFICE.

8. THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM IN THE COUNTRY IS SLOWING DOWN. ALTHOUGH INTERCITY BUSES AND TRAINS ARE STILL RUNNING. IT IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO HIRE TRUCKS TO CARRY GOODS IN INTER-PROVINCIAL TRAFFIC. SOME SHORTAGES OF FOOD AND BASIC NECESSITIES ARE BEGINNING TO APPEAR IN THE MARKET.

9. THE ARMY HOLDS THE KEY TO ENDING THE CONFLICT. PRESSURES ARE BUILDING ON THEM TO TAKE SOME ACTION TO SAVE THE COUNTRY FROM GREATER ANARCHY AND CHAOS. WE BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THE ARMY'S POSITION REMAINS AS LAST REPORTED. THEY DO NOT WANT TO BE DRAWN INTO WHAT THEY SEE AS A BASICALLY POLITICAL CONFLICT AND WANT AND ARE ENCOURAGING BOTH PARTIES TO WORK OUT A "CONSTITUTIONAL" SOLUTION. ALL THE CORPS COMMANDERS WERE IN PINDI YESTERDAY FOR A PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED PROMOTION PANEL MEETING. THEY MET AT GENERAL ZIA'S RESIDENCE AND WE ASSUME DISCUSSED THE CONFIDENTIAL

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CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION AS WELL. WE UNDERSTAND THAT AFTER THE MEETING THEY ALL DINED WITH THE PRIME MINISTER.

10. IN THE FUTURE, THE ARMY, WHILE SURVEYING THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE, WILL MOST PROBABLY SEE FURTHER REFUSALS ON THE PART OF THE PM TO LEAVE OFFIE GRACEFULLY, ACCOMPANIED BY INCREASED VIOLENCE AND DISRUPTIONS INSTIGATED BY THE PNA. THE OPPOSITION WILL CONTINUE TO RAISE THE STAKES AND THE PRESSURES WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD ON THE ARMY TO MOVE. WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE OPPOSITION WANTS TO SEE THE ARMY TAKE OVER. MOST PNA LEADERS WOULD OBVIOUSLY PREFER A SOLUTION UNDER WHICH THEY PROMPTLY ASSUME THE REINS OF POWER FIA FRESH ELECTONS, ALTHOUGH A FEW SUCH AS ASGHAR KHAN MAY SEE THEIR OWN CHANCES FOR NATIONAL LEADERSHIP ENHANCED BY AN ARMY TAKEOVER. IF THE PNA HAS TO CHOOSE FINALLY BETWEEN BHUTTO AND THE ARMY, HOWEVER, WE DO NOT DOUBT IT WILL CHOOSE THE LATTER.

11. THE ARMY, WE BELIEVE, WILL NOT MOVE UNTIL THEY SEE THAT ALL THE OTHER OPTIONS HAVE DISAPPEARED. THE PNA POSITION THAT BOTH THE PRESENT EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATURE ARE ILLEGAL AND FRAUDULENT LIMITS THE CONSTITUTIONAL OPTIONS THAT CAN LEAD TO A SOLUTION. ONE POSSIBILITY, ALLUDED TO BY MUFTI MAHMUD, WOULD BE FOR THE PRESIDENT TO DECLARE AN INTERNAL EMERGENCY AND BY ORDINANCE DISSOLVE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND CALL FOR NEW ELECTIONS. ALTHOUGH THIS MAY BE SEEN AS CONSTITUTIONALLY ACCEPTABLE, IT DEPENDS ON THE PRESIDENT ACTING AGAINST THE PRIME MINISTER - A STEP WE DOUBT HE WILL TAKE UNLESS FORCED TO BY THE ARMY OR UNTIL HE IS COMPLETELY CERTAIN IN HIS OWN MIND THAT BHUTTO HAS

BECOME POWERLESS AND COULD NOT RETALIATE.

12. IF A CONSTITUTIONAL SOLUTION IS NOT ACHIEVED, ANOTHER POSSIBILITY IS THAT THE PPP PARLIAMENTARY PARTY ITSELF MAY DECIDE THE PM MUST GO AND FORCE HIM FROM OFFICE BY REMOVING THEIR SUPPORT. WE DO NOT YET SEE, HOWEVER, A STRONG ENOUGH MOVEMENT WITHIN THE PARTY TO DUMP THE PM. ALTHOUGH SEVERAL ADDITIONAL MNAS AND MPAS HAVE LEFT THE PARTY, SO MANY ARE EITHER SO CLOSELY CONFIDENTIAL

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TIED TO BHUTTO POLITICALLY, OR REALIZE THEY HAVE NO POLITICAL FUTURE OUTSIDE THE PARTY, THAT FINDING A MAJORITY TO AGREE TO FORCE THE PM OUT WOULD BE EXTREMELY DIFFICULT AND FOR THE MOMENT IS UNLIKELY. THERE ARE ALSO MANY PPP MEMBERS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHO REALIZE THAT THEY COULD NOT RETURN TO THE PARLIAMENT IN FREE ELECTIONS AND SEE ANY MOVEMENT TO OUST BHUTTO AND HOLD FRESH ELECTIONS AS SIGNING THEIR OWN POLITICAL DEATH WARRANTS.

13. IF ALL OTHER OPTIONS ARE CLOSED, THE ARMY MAY BE FACED WITH THE STARK CHOICE OF EITHER TAKING OVER AND DECLARING MARTIAL LAW OR WATCHING A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN OF LAW AND ORDER AND PARALYSIS OF ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN THE COUNTRY. FACED WITH THAT CHOICE, WE BELIEVE THE ARMY WOULD MOVE IN.

14. THE PLAY CONTINUES TO UNFOLD AT A SPORADIC BUT INCREASINGLY TURBULENT PACE AND WE CANNOT PREDICT WHEN THE DENOUEMENT WILL COME. BHUTTO HAS SHOWN GREAT RESILIENCY AND MAY BE ABLE TO HOLD ON FOR SOME TIME YET; IT IS EQUALLY POSSIBLE THAT THE NATIONAL DETERIORATION WILL GREATLY ACCELERATE AND ONE OF THE SCENARIOS LEADING TO NEW LEADERSHIP IN PAKISTAN WILL BE REALIZED IN A MATTER OF DAYS.
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Message Attributes

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TAGS: PINT, PK, (BHUTTO, ALI)
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